

THE COMET.

BY WALTER WILDFIRE.

HIS COURSE HE BENDS
THRO' THE CALM FIRMAMENT ; BUT WHETHER UP OR DOWN,
BY CENTRICK OR ECCENTRICK, HARD TO TELL. *MILTON.*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1811.

To the Readers of the First Number.

OUR printer complains that he has been much pestered with the questions of inquisitive people respecting the editor of *The Comet*. To relieve him from his embarrassment and preclude all further inquiries from the idly curious, we have consented that our name should, in this and all future numbers, stand at the head of the paper, immediately after the title, as above.

W. W.

THEATRICAL RECORDER—No I.

And do you think there are any who are influenced by this ?

• Lud ! yes, sir—the number of those who undergo the trouble of judging for themselves is very few indeed. *Sheridan's Critick.*

IN this department of our paper we shall notice the performances at the Boston Theatre, and it will be our endeavour to keep a *fair record* of their merits and defects, their claims to honour and approbation, and their ill deserts. In making this publick declaration, we are conscious that we take upon ourselves a very high and responsible office, which renders us obnoxious to the displeasure of the green-room. We also know very well, that our remarks can be considered as nothing more than the opinions of private individuals, and an appeal will always lie from our judgement ; which appeal will at last be determined by the tribunal of publick taste. We are induced to this undertaking from a sincere wish to promote the interest of the theatre, convinced that with it is connected the interest of science and literature.

----- We dare with truth commend
The decent STAGE, as Virtue's natural friend.

Though oft debas'd by scenes profane and loose,
No reason weighs against its proper use.
Though the lewd priest his sacred function shame,
Religion's perfect law is still the same.

We declare unequivocally that we commence the task with no unjust prejudices nor favourable prepossessions ; that, as *recorders*, we " know not Tyrians from Trojans ;" and that we shall appear as advocates for the publick, the managers, and the performers, respectively, whenever either party shall require our interference. If, however, any of the concerned shall hereafter find upon our *records*, incorrect decisions, improper inferences, or unjust reflections, the pages of this paper shall ever be open for their vindication.

It is unnecessary to say any thing in this place of the improvements and decorations made in the theatre since last season ; they have been detailed in the publick newspapers, and the managers deservedly applauded.

The theatre was opened for the season, on Monday night, Oct. 14, with

Laugh when you can and *The Midnight Hour*.

Oct. 61. *The Castle Spectre* and *No Song no Supper*.

Oct. 18. *The School of Reform* and *Brazen Mask*.

Oct. 21. *Pizarro* and *My Grandmother*.

It has of late years become much in fashion *to cut plays* in representation. The manager applies, not the *pruning knife* merely, but the *saw* and *hatchet*, and lops off whole scenes with as little ceremony as a day labourer does the branches from the poplars in our streets, till little remains except the *stump*. After this, each character is suffered to undergo the excoriation of the performer, especially if he happen to have "a bad study ;" so that when the piece is brought upon the stage, the identity of the *acting* and *reading* editions is completely destroyed. Such was most lamentably the fate of *Pizarro* this evening. Four or five whole scenes were omitted, beside numberless speeches and sentences. Some of these may undoubtedly be spared ; but the omission of others, disfigures the whole piece.

We enter our solemn protest against the practice of finishing this play with the death of *Rolla*. The mind is left unsatisfied concerning the fate of the other principal personages. The am-

bitious and unprincipled *Pizarro* is left to triumph over innocence and misfortune ; *Elvira*, whose fate excites the most of our sympathy, is supposed to have died in tortures, the victim of his vengeance. If the last scene were retained, *Pizarro* would receive some part of the punishment due to his crimes ; *Elvira* would be saved from a cruel death, and, what is still more grateful to virtuous sensibility, would exhibit the symptoms of a gracious repentance, and a resolution to return to the path of virtue ; and every auditor would be impressed with a useful moral lesson, and be better satisfied with the play. If the advocate for the omission should say, that the author's catastrophe is not according to history, we grant it ; but will not admit historical truth as an argument against the correctness of our position.

The characters were perhaps as well cast as they could be in the present company. This however is no excuse for bringing forward a play, some parts of which must suffer from incompetent representatives.* Of Mr. Drake's *Pizarro* we say nothing, the part having been first assigned to Mr. Morse. Mr. Duff would be entitled to the same lenity, if we thought the managers had thrust him into the part of *Rolla*, contrary to his own inclination and better judgement. He will always be admired in modern comedy ; no actor that ever appeared on our boards can better hit off the eccentric and fashionable rakes of Colman, Morton, and Reynolds ; but his attempts in tragedy are *always* deficient in dignity, and *sometimes* irresistibly comical. He renders the finest speeches ineffective, by the levity of his gestures ; and continually reminds the spectator of *Gossamer* and *Charles Surface*. Mr. Robinson is an improving actor. His *Alonzo* was not destitute of merit. It was principally deficient in ease. We recommend to him, diligent study, that he may not be obliged to *wait for the word*, and a little more moderation in speaking. If he does not in time arrive at the head of his profession, he may at least *look over the heads* of some who go before him.

If it matter'd a pin who played such a silly character as *Cora*, we should quarrel with Mrs. Duff, for her stiffness and formality. *Elvira*, was played by Mrs. Powell ; and we have only to regret

* Whether the profits of the theatre are sufficient to enable the managers to keep a performer for each individual line of acting, is a question which it may be proper to discuss hereafter.

that she should connive with the managers in *cutting her part*. When *she* plays this part, we wish to hear the whole, even though it were twice as long.

Oct. 23. *The Way to get married and Tekeli.*

Mr. Duff was perfectly at home in *Tangent*. If he is the guardian of his own fame, he will stick to the comick muse, who is far more kind to him than her melancholy sister. Mr. Vaughan exhibited some very good acting in *Faulkener*, particularly in the prison scene. His juvenile appearance is not in his favour in characters of this sort. We would suggest to him whether his transitions from soberness to "moody madness laughing wild," are not at times too sudden. Mr. Dickenson's *Toby Allspice* was seasoned with all sorts of spices that could make it comical. Mr. Entwistle played *M'Query*, the Irish barrister, with great effect. If the great art of acting lies in *not appearing to act*, Mr. Entwistle is entitled to the praise of a first rate comick actor. There is a certain bluntness in his manner, the peculiar characteristick of the Irish, which, without the appearance of study, sets gravity at defiance. We want to see him in *Major O'Flaberty*. Mr. Robinson did what he could for *Dashall*, but *dashing* does not seem to be his forte.

Oct. 25. *Adrian and Orrila and Animal Magnetism.*

Miss Dellinger from the New York theatre made her first appearance on this stage. She played *Constance* in the farce, in which were introduced the songs of "Vive la bagatelle" and "The tuneful lark," for the purpose of displaying her musical talents. As we had not an opportunity of seeing the performance, we know not how she succeeded. She is a pupil of Mr. Hewitt.

THE EXILE.

THE play-bills of the Boston theatre announce the preparation of *The Exile*, a melo-dramatick opera, by F. Reynolds, Esq. The following, copied from an English magazine, is

THE FABLE.

Count Ulrick, a nobleman of distinction, after acquiring great reputation in the Russian army, is nevertheless banished to Siberia, through the base influence of *Prince Lowenstern* over the *Empress Catharine*. He is followed by *Sedona*, his wife, and his daughter *Alexina Romanoff*, the nephew of the *Governour of Tobolskow*, frequently visiting the wretched

ed family at their retreat in the neighbourhood, a mutual attachment takes place between him and *Alexina*; but his uncle suspecting it, in order to prevent his future visits, and to compel him to marry the niece of *Prince Lowenstern*, banishes him beyond the frontiers, and endeavours to force *Alexina* into a marriage with *Welzien*.

Romanoff, assumes the name of *Daran*, goes to St. Petersburgh, and, in the disguise of an Indian, gets into the service of *Baron Alltradoff*, a nephew of *Prince Lowenstern*, a pert, vain coxcomb; and in that capacity accompanies him to *Tobolskow*, to which place the *Baron* is going to claim the hand of *Catharine*, the *Gouvernour's* niece, whose affections he in vain attempts to win by his skill in musick and dancing, her heart being already devoted to *Count Calmar*, by whom she is beloved with equal ardour.

Romanoff, aware of the ruin preparing for *Count Ulrick*, to conceal his benevolent designs, assumes a ferocious aspect, and expresses a deadly hate to *The Exile* and his family, by which means he completely blinds the *Gouvernour*, as to his intentions and jointly with *Welzien* (the enraged and rejected suitor of *Alexina*) is entrusted with the execution of the *Empress's* orders; in pursuance of which, *Ulrick* is dragged from his retreat, and imprisoned in *Tobolskow*, and they are sent in pursuit of *Alexina*, who has set out, accompanied by *Yermach*, a faithful domestick, on the desperate undertaking of travelling to St. Petersburgh, to solicit her father's pardon.

In this undertaking he completely frustrates the vindictive designs of *Welzien*, and *Alexina* reaches the neighbourhood of *Moscow* in safety. The rejoicings of the inhabitants of that city announce the grateful tidings of the accession of *Elizabeth* to the throne of Russia, and of her approaching coronation. *Alexina* hastens thither, rushes into the presence of her new sovereign, and notwithstanding the influence of the *Patriarch* (a near relation of *Prince Lowenstern*) she procures, through the means of the disguised *Romanoff*, the pardon she solicited, and immediately departs for *Siberia*, without waiting for the deed of pardon to be completed; by which means she is again subjected to all the bitterness of sorrow; and, in order to save herself and family from immediate destruction, is compelled to marry the supposed *Daran*.

The *Gouvernour* at length receives the royal mandate from his court for the liberation of *Count Ulrick*, and by it he becomes acquainted with the villainy and disgrace of *Prince Lowenstern*, which reconciles him to the union of his daughter with *Count Calmar*, to whose protection she had fled, after escaping from her uncle's house, by the ingenuity of *Servitz*. *Romanoff*, not *Daran*, claims *Alexina* for his bride, and *The Exile* is restored to his former honours.

The ground work of *The Exiles* is to be found in *Elizabeth, ou les Exiles de Siberie*, an admirable novel by *Madame Cottin*. The charms of

this very interesting story are preserved with all Mr. Reynolds's acknowledged skill in dramatick effect.

The musick is by Mazzinghi, and very appropriate. The melo-dramatick part is particularly ingenious.

IRREGULAR ODE.

Dr. Johnson said that "of the poems of CONGREVE, that to Mrs. Arabella Hunt is perhaps the best." Notwithstanding this meagre compliment, it is doubted whether the English Poets afford a more pleasing example of lyrick poetry. Its scarcity is a sufficient apology for its introduction into this paper.

ON MRS. ARABELLA HUNT, SINGING.

I.

LET all be husht, each softest motion cease,
And ev'ry loud tumultuous thought at peace,
And ev'ry ruder gasp of breath
Be calm, as in the arms of death.
And thou most fickle, most uneasy part,
Thou restless wanderer, my heart,
Be still ! gently, ah ! gently, leave,
Thou busy, idle thing, to heave.
Stir not a pulse, and let my blood,
That turbulent, unruly flood,
Be softly staid :

Let me be all, but my attention, dead.
Go, rest, unnecessary springs of life,
Leave your officious toil and strife ;
For I would hear her voice, and try
If it be possible to die.

II.

Come, all ye love-sick maids and wounded swains,
And listen to her healing strains.
A wond'rous balm between her lips she wears,
Of sov'reign force to soften cares ;
And this through ev'ry ear she can impart,
(By tuneful breath diffus'd) to ev'ry heart.
Swiftly the gentle charmer flies,
And to the tender grief soft air applies,
Which, warbling mystick sounds,
Cements the bleeding panter's wounds.
But ah ! beware of clam'rous moan :

Let no unpleasing murmur, or harsh groan,
 Your slighted loves declare :
 Your very tend'rest moving sighs forbear,
 For even they will be too boist'rous here.
 Hither let nought but sacred silence come,
 And let all saucy praise be dumb.

III.

And lo ! Silence himself is here ;
 Methinks I see the midnight god appear,
 In all his downy pomp array'd,
 Behold the rev'rend shade :
 An ancient sigh he sits upon,
 Whose memory of sound is long since gone,
 And purposely annihilated for his throne :
 Beneath, two soft transparent clouds do meet,
 In which he seems to sink his softer feet.
 A melancholy thought, condens'd to air,
 Stol'n from a lover in despair,
 Like a thin mantle, serves to wrap
 In fluid folds his visionary shape.
 A wreath of darkness round his head he wears,
 Where curling mists supply the want of hairs :
 While the still vapours which from poppies rise,
 Bedew his hoary face, and luil his eyes.

IV.

But hark ! the heav'nly sphere turns round,
 And silence now is drown'd
 In extacy of sound.
 How on a sudden the still air is charm'd,
 As if all harmony were just alarm'd !
 And ev'ry soul with transport fill'd,
 Alternately is thaw'd and chill'd.
 See how the heav'nly choir
 Come flocking to admire,
 And with what speed and care,
 Descending angels cull the thinnest air !
 Haste then, come all th' immortal throng,
 And listen to her song ;
 Leave your lov'd mansions, in the sky,
 And hither, quickly hither fly ;
 Your loss of heav'n, nor shall you need to fear,
 While she sings, 'tis heav'n here.

V.

See how they croud, see how the little cherubs skip !
 While others sit around her mouth, and sip
 Sweet hallelujahs from her lip.
 Those lips, where in surprise of bliss they rove ;
 For ne'er before did angels taste
 So exquisite a feast,
 Of musick and of love.
 Prepare then, ye immortal choir,
 Each sacred minstrel tune his lyre,
 And with her voice in chorus join,
 Her voice, which next to yours is most divine.
 Bless the glad earth with heav'nly lays,
 And to that pitch th' eternal accents raise,
 Which only breath inspir'd can reach,
 To notes, which only she can learn, and you can teach :
 While we, charm'd with the lov'd excess,
 Are wrapt in sweet forgetfulness
 Of all, of all, but of the present happiness :
 Wishing for ever in that state to lie,
 For ever to be dying so, yet never die.

THE RAINBOW.

How vast the extent, how delicate the texture of that showery arch ! it compasses the heavens with a glorious circle, and makes us forget the horrors of the storm : elegant its form, and rich its tinctures, but more delightful its sacred signification. While the violet and the rose blush in its beautiful aspect, the olive branch smiles in its gracious import ; it writes in radiant dies what the angels sung in harmonious strains : " Peace on earth and good will towards men." It is the stamp of insurance for the continual welfare of this present world, and a token of a happier kingdom. A kingdom, where the rainbow is represented as surrounding the throne ; to intimate, that there storms shall beat and winter pierce no more, but " one unbounded spring forever bloom."

FORTUNE.

What can give us a more apt emblem of the uncertainty of the gifts, and the changeableness of the disposition of this lady than the manner in which she is usually represented.—A woman standing

upon one foot on a ball in the midst of the sea.—A woman, reckoned the most unsteady ; thus standing in a tottering condition, on so unstable a foundation as a rolling ball, subject to every fluctuating wave, and each blast of wind gathering in her waving garment.—Her smiles and frowns, her goods or evils are so momentary and uncertain, the one are little to be prided on, or the other but little regretted, as we know not how soon a change may come.

NEWSPAPERS.

THERE is no literary production less esteemed by people in general than a newspaper, although in fact it is the most difficult work that can be undertaken.—Let us take a view of the abilities required in a person editing a newspaper.

He should possess an extensive knowledge of the language in which it is written, a great quickness in composition, and a concise method of narrating events ; he should be able to give his sentiments on war by sea and land ; he should be fully acquainted with geography, the history of the times, of illustrious persons, of policks, the secrets of courts ; and the manners and customs of all nations in the world : and without entering into a long detail of requisites, we can see by those already enumerated, that the necessary knowledge to produce a good newspaper, is what can be the lot of but very few persons. What then are we to say of the various editors of our ephemeral papers ?

SIMPLICITY OF DESCRIPTION.

I think the following eminently natural and simple. It is an extract from Chaucer's *Man of Lawes Tale* ; where Constance, the heroine of the story, during the absence of her husband, who was warring against the Scots, is driven from her home by the machinations of her mother-in-law, and with her infant committed to the mercy of the winds and waves in an empty bark—

Hire litel child lay weping in hire arm,
And kneeling pitously to him she said,
Pees, litel son, I wol do thee no harm :
With that her couverchief of hire hed she braid,
And over his litel eyen she it laid,
And in hire arm she lulleth it ful fast,
And into heaven hire eyen up she cast.

COMPARISON OF MAN'S BODY TO A HOUSE.

THE reader will be pleased with the ensuing extract from Francis Quarles, who died in the year 1641, one of that poetical tribe which Dr. Johnson denominated *metaphysical*. He was much celebrated in his day, but his works are now greatly, and perhaps unjustly neglected. They were complimentary verses addressed to Phineas Fletcher, on the publication of his *Purple Island*; they are usually prefixed to that poem, and though quaint, are full of wit and ingenuity.

Man's body's like a house : his greater bones
 Are the main *timber* ; and the lesser ones
 Are smaller *splints* : his *ribs* are *laths* daub'd o'er,
 Plaster'd with *flesh* and *blood* : his *mouth*'s the *door*,
 His *throat*'s the *narrow entry* ; and his *heart*
 Is the *great chamber*, full of curious art.
 His *midriff* is a large *partition wall*
 'Twixt the *great chamber* and the *spacious hall*.
 His *stomach* is the *kitchen*, where the meat
 Is often but half *sod*, for want of heat.
 His *spleen*'s a *vessel* nature does allot
 To take the *scum* that rises from the *pot*.
 His *lungs* are like the *bellows* that respire
 In every *office* quick'ning every *fire*.
 His *nose* the *chimney* is, whereby are vented
 Such *fumes* as with the *bellows* are augmented.
 His *bowels* are the *sink*, whose part's to drain
 All noisome *filth* and keep the *kitchen* clean.
 His *eyes* are crystal *windows*, clear and bright ;
 Let in the *object* and let out the *sight*.
 And as the *timber* is, or great, or small,
 Or strong, or weak, 'tis apt to stand, or fall.
 Yet is the likeliest *building* sometimes known
 To fall by obvious chances ; overthrown
 Oftimes by *tempests*, by the full *mouth'd* blasts
 Of *Heaven* ; sometimes by *fire* ; sometimes it wastes
 Through unadvis'd *neglect* ; put case, the stuff
 Were ruin-proof, by nature strong enough
 To conquer time, and age ; put case, it should
 Ne'er know an end, alas ! our *leases* would.

*What hast thou then, proud flesh and blood, to boast ?
 Thy days are evil, at best ; but few, at most ;
 But sad, at merriest ; and but weak, at strongest ;
 Unsure, at surest ; and but short, at longest.*

—♦—
APHORISM.

Looking through one end of a telescope makes things appear less, and at a distance. With this end we generally behold our own faults and foibles ; but with the other, that makes things appear nearer and larger, those of our neighbours.

—♦—
SERAGLIO OF MEN.

The kingdom of Patan, in the peninsula of Malacca, must not be governed but by a woman, though in fact it is by men the kingdom is governed. Let us explain this seeming paradox.—According to the laws of Patan, the queen must not marry, instead of which, she is entitled to have as many gallants as she pleases. It is for her dignity and the necessary splendour of her court, to have a seraglio of the handsomest men in her dominions, and from wherever they can be obtained. Among these men there are always some whom she prefers to others ; and these are generally the rulers of the state. The favourites of the queen leave her but a shadow of power ; but she enjoys their caresses whenever she is pleased to command them. At her death she is succeeded by a daughter, who is treated in the same manner.—This kingdom is a fruitful and abundant country. The natives are partly Mahometans, and partly idolaters : but they are all equally voluptuous. Their capital, called Patang, is one of the handsomest and richest cities in India.

—♦—
EPITAPH.

Here lies —

In truth, you'll find beneath this ground
 One, who ne'er yet in truth was found :
 Yet none on earth poor Tom deceiv'd,
 For always lying, none believ'd.

But strange !

By fate despatch'd without his fill,
 Below, the dog is lying still.

SPIRIT OF FOREIGN JOURNALS.

TO A MISER.

MEN say you are wealthy, but falsely, I'm sure,
 And thus I can prove it, my friend—
 You have not a penny to give to the poor,
 Nor have you a penny to spend.
 You keep; it is true, an abundance of pelf,
 But that 's for your heirs, it is not for yourself.

The deputation who waited upon young Bonaparte have recorded an instance of his extraordinary vigour before he saw the light. The emperor was surprised one night at being kicked out of bed, and expressed his disapprobation to his consort in the morning. " My dear," said the empress, " I never stirred a leg ; it must have been the King of the Romans ! "

It may be observed in all the advertisements for persons desirous of entering into the matrimonial state, that the letters must be post paid. What a prospect of felicity does that state present, in which *one party would not give two pence for the other !*

The friends of an unfortunate Hibernian, who was lately executed for robbery, placed the following inscription on a tombstone which was erected to his memory :—" Here lies the corpse of Michael Fagan, who died in the full enjoyment of his health, by a fall from a scaffold."

A CONCEIT—FROM THE SPANISH.

'Tis most impossible, you own,
 That water should from fire arise :
 But, tell me, have you never known
 Tears flow from tender lovers' eyes ?

IMPROPTU—*On Signior Grimaldi's performance of the Clown.*

With power to give each feature play,
 In various movements, grave or light,
 Though he himself is *Grim-all-day*,
 He makes an audience *grin all night.*